

Parliament, because the Bishops had not ventured to face all this opposition for the sake of weeding the Church. It is not unlikely that, if severe persecution had been applied in all parts of England at a time when the heretics were still so uncertain of their position that they dared not face martyrdom, the movement might have been crushed outright. But it was allowed to take root and to produce men of sterner stuff. The chronicler of St. Albans bitterly laments the apathy of the Bishops in allowing the Poor Priests to roam their dioceses at pleasure, and declares that the only one who did his duty was fighting Bishop Spencer. That vigorous prelate swore he would burn any such preacher who came within his jurisdiction, with the result that there was not a single Lollard heard of in Norwich diocese.¹ If his threat really produced this result, it is the more remarkable inasmuch as Norfolk and Suffolk afterwards became the hotbed of the sect. But when Henry the Fourth ascended the throne, the centres of Lollardry were found where the milder Bishops held sway—in the shires of Leicester, Northampton and Nottingham, in London and its neighbourhood, in Sussex,² Berks and Wilts, in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire. (*See map, p. 352.*)

Here ends the history of the first generation of Lollards. We have reached, if we have not already outstepped, the furthest limit that can be set to the ^e Age of Wycliffe.* In this calamitous epoch we have seen the noble institutions of early England sink, not without noise of falling, to their grave. We are pervaded and oppressed by a sense that true revival cannot come except with the triumph of new ideas and the erection of new machinery. The political victories of the Commons are unstable and of little worth as long as society is rent asunder by the insolence of the great lords and their military servants. Neither can the mediaeval monarchy revive under conditions so altered, without first altering itself. The old-fashioned management of the navy can no longer maintain maritime supremacy. The military system

¹ WaJs., ii. 188-9.
no. 247, m. 17.

* For Sussex, see *Hot. Glaus.*, 21 B. II.